

MAINE FIRE PROTECTION SERVICES COMMISSION

MEETING MINUTES JANUARY 7, 2002

The meeting of the Commission was called to order by Vice-Chairman Darrel Fournier at 1:04 P.M. Members present: Jack Berry, Jay Bradshaw, Jeff Cammack, John Cannon, John Dean, Darrel Fournier, Al Godfrey, Randy Keep, Jethro Pease, Michael Quint, Christine Savage, Steve Willis and Susan Pinette (Staff). Members excused: Michael Albert, Ted Johnston, Jeff Maker, Harty Norris, Bill O'Gara, Tom Parent and Dave Wacker. Guests: Everard Stevens – One Beacon Insurance Company, Chief Bill Page – Winslow Fire Department, Vicki Schmidt – Franford Mutual Aid Fire Training Association.

The minutes of the December 17, 2001 meeting were accepted as amended by correcting the name Patey from Patry on page 3.

Old Business

Randy Keep reported on what is happening on the Actuarial Study on the health care bridge. He has contacted Actuarial Designs and Situations and has not received a call back at this time. He has contacted Gallagher and Associates and was advised that they do not do this type of work however they recommended Bill Bremer a former employee of Blue Cross & Blue Shield that now does this type work and a telephone meeting has been set up with him for tomorrow morning. Randy is not sure if Bremer will be able to assist the Commission and requested any advice that anyone might have to offer. John Cannon suggested Foster Hewett Associates a large national firm that has done work for the State Retirement System in the past as a possible answer to our dilemma. He however was unable to provide the Commission with a contact person. Darrel Fournier advised he would contact the former Volunteer Fire Insurance Organization (now has new name) Vice President that he knows to see if they do anything like this and will contact Randy tomorrow if he can obtain any information.

A discussion then ensued regarding the bind that the Commission is getting into by not awarding the contract for the recruitment and retention RFP study so that can be worked on while we are still trying to find someone to do the Actuarial Study on the health care bridge. There are only about 10 more weeks in this Legislative Session and we are rapidly getting painted into a corner.

A motion by Steve Willis, 2nd by Jay Bradshaw that the Commission move ahead and award the contract for the recruitment and retention RFP portion of the study to Penflex Company that submitted the only proposal was discussed at length. John Cannon expressed deep concern that if the Commission awarded the half covering the volunteer sector there might not be enough money left to do the Actuarial Study for the health care bridge for career firefighters and asked that the Commission not award the contract until we have found someone to do the health care bridge study. Jeff Cammack and Jack Berry also expressed concern that if the motion passed the Commission would be splitting the total package for the fire service. Serious discussion covered what will happen if the Commission holds on to this for a couple of weeks before awarding the contract. It was concluded that the Commission can not standby for another couple of weeks before starting the recruitment and retention study. Also by moving ahead we will not be shortchanging the career firefighters and they will be taken care of. The motion was brought to a vote with 9 For, 0 Against and 2 Abstentions.

A motion by Jethro Pease, 2nd by Steve Willis that the subcommittee on the healthcare bridge be allowed to execute a contract or agreement for an Actuarial Study on the healthcare bridge within the \$15,000. allocated. A discussion ensued regarding the three options of the RFP and whether an option could be dropped if the bid came in over the \$15,000. appropriated for the study. It was concluded that we shouldn't worry about this until we have a cost in hand. Randy Keep then brought up the fact that the Commission doesn't know the exact number of firefighters in Maine. A discussion revealed that with better than 85 % of the Commission surveys returned we have an excellent handle on the number of firefighters in the state. Jack Berry also advised that there are 911 paid firefighters in the state. This number may have changed slightly since that survey was done. Jeff Cammack will research with the Maine State Retirement System the number of retired career firefighters in Maine. The problem then will be to try to determine who currently has health insurance coverage and who doesn't. The vote was unanimous in the affirmative.

With regard to the contract with Penflex Company on the recruitment and retention RFP, Jay Bradshaw and Susan Pinette will prepare.

The Commission has received a bill in the amount of \$225. from the Maine Municipal Association for the dinner meeting on December 17, 2001. It was voted that the Commission pay this bill in its entirety rather than trying to split it among various fire service organizations.

The draft Commission Report to the Governor and Legislature was discussed in detail with many suggested revisions agreed upon. Ted Johnston had rewritten the report extensively and copies were handed out for review during the discussion. Susan Pinette collected all of the suggested revisions and will redraft the report in the new format and present to the membership for further review. John Dean recommended that appendices be added to the end of the report to flesh out the details. The other Commissioners agreed that this would be a good idea.

New Business

Darrel Fournier advised that he will be speaking at a Legislative Hearing tomorrow on a bill regarding rulemaking by the Fire Marshal's Office. John Dean explained that this is basically a housekeeping measure. In 1997 a section of the statute was revised and wording enacted that did not include rulemaking ability to enforce the smoke alarm law in civil cases. This bill adds a paragraph to correct the deficiency. The second issue tomorrow deals with issuing surplus state computers to local fire departments. There is an amendment being proposed to add a \$50. handling fee to be paid to the State Surplus Office for administration of the program. John Dean expressed concern that wording in the bill instructs his office to administer the program and he doesn't have the manpower to do so. He will be testifying that they are neither for nor against the program, however, should only be involved in providing the software and training on the use of it. There was also concern expressed that the computers made available be capable of operating the fire reporting software package. The Commission's position is that we support the concept of providing surplus computers to local fire departments, however does not support the \$50. fee if the computers do not meet the FMO specifications. The computers must have an operating system, adequate hard drive and adequate memory to operate before being made available to the local fire departments if it is to be a deal for the local folks. A straw vote was held and the Commission members were split on whether there should even be a \$50. handling fee.

Chief Bill Page, the Maine Fire Chief's Association representative on the training facilities study sub-committee, reported on work he has done in this area. He reported that after meeting at the Maine Criminal Justice Academy, those folks don't want the fire

service training there. They feel it is their academy and they don't want to open it to anyone else. He has looked at other options and reported that the Kennebec Valley Technical College has 48 acres and would welcome us there. The Goodwill-Hinckley School in Fairfield has 800 acres and the Fairfield Fire Department is in the process of trying to build a training site there and invites us to join them. He has talked to the Togus Fire Chief and they have 500 acres at the Veterans Hospital facility and they would like to have us develop a facility there. The Maine Forest Service trains with the Shoreline Patrol at the Brunswick Naval Air Station and they would like to have us on the base. Bill will explore further regarding dormitory facility availability and other details and report back to the Commission.

Steve Willis spoke on getting the Commission's thoughts on the training facility sub-committee makeup and handed out a draft chart recommending 10 organizations make up the official sub-committee. A discussion fleshed out the recommendations of the proposed membership. Motion by John Cannon, 2nd by Jethro Pease that the sub-committee be established was approved by a unanimous vote.

Another discussion around the funding for the Fire Marshal Office ensued with a recommendation that a surcharge be added onto insurance bills like the E-911 surcharge on telephone bills. Randy Keep reported he had discussed this with the Bureau of Insurance and they hadn't gotten back to him on the subject. Steve Willis suggested that Representative Randy Berry would be willing to help facilitate this if it appears to be a viable option.

Randy Keep inquired of Representative Mike Quint if he had made any progress in his endeavors with the Maine Revenue Service trying to sort out if the FMO had received all of the surcharge monies. Rep. Quint reported that he hadn't had a chance to finalize the review and would try to be able to report back to the next meeting.

The next meeting of the Commission will be held on Monday, January 14, 2002 at 1:00 P.M. at the State EMS headquarters in Augusta. The meeting to follow will be held on Monday, January 28, 2002 at 1:00 P.M. in Room 438 of the State House in Augusta (the EMS conference room isn't available that day).

With no further business to come before the Commission, the meeting adjourned at 3:25 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,

Albert L. Godfrey, Sr., P.E., P.L.S., C.S.E.
Secretary